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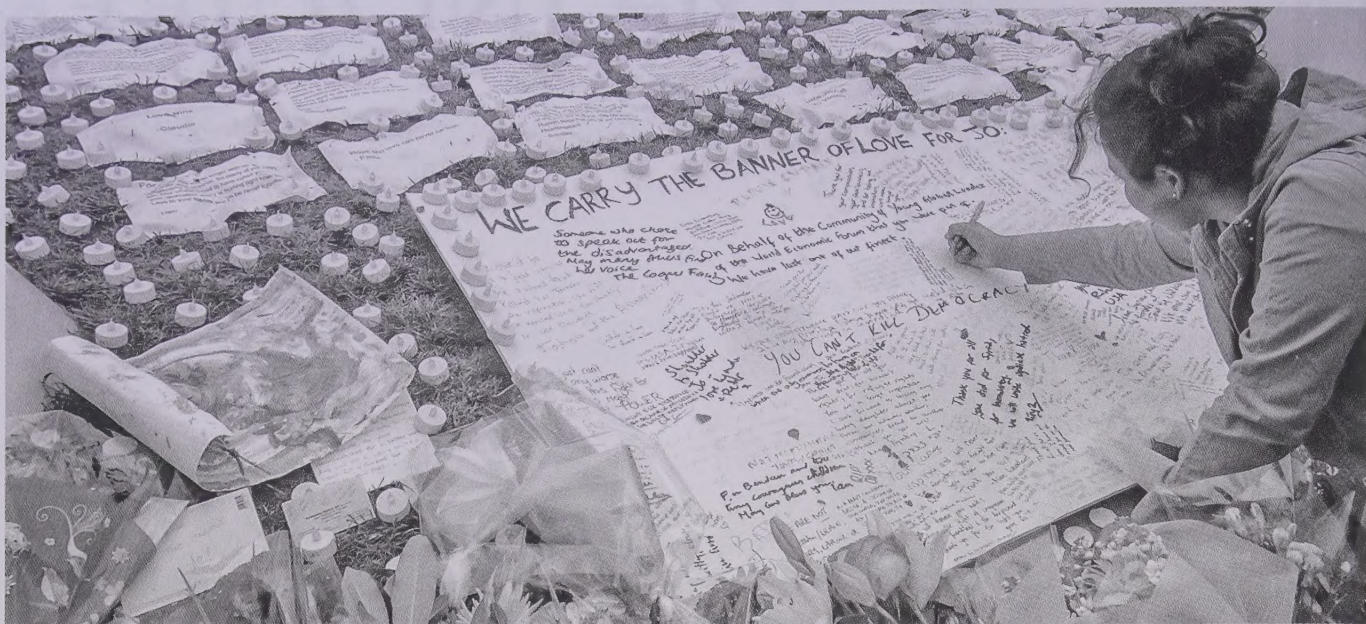


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**A sister
brutally slain**



Tributes left at Parliament Square for Jo Cox. Photo By Garry Knight, via Wikimedia Commons

A Sister Cruelly Slain

For Jo Cox, Member of Parliament

There are no words...

Nothing can be said...

It's all been said...

Where was God?
some ask

But that's not the question.

The question is, 'Where were we?'

Where were we the last time that
we heard Jo Cox's democracy –
our democracy – attacked?

The question is,
'Where are your tears?'

'...my pain is too much,' Jo said
as she lay dying.

If we don't feel something of
that pain we cannot claim the
once-honoured name of 'human'.

Continues>>>

A Sister Cruelly Slain - continued

The savage killing of Jo Cox MP shocked me more than I would have expected in a time of savage killings. I'm not sure why. Murder is not unusual.

I've since learnt that she was closer to my family's circle of acquaintance than I knew, but that isn't it. One thing I'm sure of is this, that those who abuse our Members of Parliament in the most vile and threatening of ways don't deserve to share the same planet with them.

MPs have put their heads above the parapet for what they believe in. They have dedicated themselves to serving a public that, all too often, wouldn't lift a finger to help anyone but themselves.

It's so easy to criticise – especially through the coward's instrument of the anonymous 'social' media - so hard, it seems, to actually do something positive for our society.

All too many of us are unfit for the democracy which our forbears – like Birstall's Joseph Priestley – struggled to bring about; the democracy in which MPs, – like Birstall's Jo Cox – work for the common good.

They sacrifice their time, their energy, their careers, and sometimes – as the vile and brutal murder of Jo Cox rams home – their lives, to serve us. All too rarely are we grateful.

If there is one thing each of us can do to honour Jo Cox it is to play an active part in our democracy. And if you can't be bothered even to vote then just keep your mouth shut – you have nothing to say that I want to hear.

The next time you vote, for whatever democratic party, say to yourself as you do so, 'This is for Jo Cox.'

Cliff Reed, 18 June 2016



Photo of tributes left at Birstall in memory of Jo Cox MP by Richard Needham©. To honour the memory of Jo Cox and support causes chosen by her family, contributions may be sent to www.gofundme.com/jocox

The INQUIRER

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Nonconformist religious newspaper

"To promote a free and inquiring religion through the worship of God and the celebration of life; the service of humanity and respect for all creation; and the upholding of the liberal Christian tradition."

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Cover Tributes to Jo Cox MP laid at

the feet of Joseph Priestley. Richard
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A man (Davide Martello) arrived at the Jo Cox memorial site in Birstall on a bicycle towing a piano. He played 'Imagine' by John Lennon, laid some flowers and cycled away. Photo and caption by Justin Clayton©, used with permission.

Inquiring Words

We can rise to the challenge and pledge our hearts to a higher calling. We can answer to the better angels of our nature and join in a shared struggle, not only against our foes – who are the world's foes – but also on behalf of our friends and neighbours. We can listen more attentively for the voice of God within us than ever before. We can heed its urgings with acts of kindness and deeds of love.

– Forrest Church

Editor's view

We mourn and we must go on

I write just two days before the EU Referendum. The results won't be known before this *Inquirer* goes to press. Such sorrow has taken hold in Britain and further afield since the killing of Jo Cox MP. It is a struggle to find meaning in a world where someone would cut down a young mother in the street because of a political disagreement.

In the US, coverage trundles on of the horrific attack on the people at Pulse, a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida. We are reminded that LGBT+ people still live endangered lives. And that vulnerability diminishes all of us. For in the case of Jo Cox, and the 49 souls who perished in Pulse, great potential has been lost, love gone.

It can feel that hate has won, that there is little we can do. But at times like these I come back to what the Rev Forrest Church, a Unitarian Universalist minister and author, recommended as a way to go on after the attack on the World Trade Centre. He said:

Want what you have.

Do what you can.

Be who you are.

In many ways that is all that we can do in the face of what can feel like a world gone mad. We mourn and we must go on. As Unitarians, being who we are is to commit to countering the animosity, the racism, the homo-hatred, the xenophobia, and do it one encounter at a time. It must be present in the way we live our lives, how we express our open-hearted faith. Love is all we have. It is for us to be the gentle angry people, singing for our (and others') lives.

– MC Burns

Synchronicity grows when you believe

Ever since I began my ministry with the good folk of Altrincham and Urmston I have experienced moments of meaningful coincidence. It is something we often talk about within the congregations because so many of us have had them.

For me, it began the summer before I started my ministry training. I walked toward the Altrincham Unitarian Church schoolroom to attend an AA meeting with my good friend Derek. He turned and said, without explanation, that I would one day be minister of the church. We spoke about it a couple of years ago and he simply said the feeling just came to him that day.

Now some folk call these moments of intuition, 'synchronicity'. I have had some powerful personal experiences of this in recent weeks. I began receiving massage therapy. It is benefiting me greatly and my therapist and I have developed a deep intuitive connection. It's something we both acknowledge. A few weeks ago I was walking to the supermarket when a strong sense of her came into my being. I visualised seeing her with someone, her boyfriend, in the supermarket. The feeling grew stronger. I walked into the supermarket and, guess what? There she was and with her boyfriend. We chatted for a few moments. I felt a little uncomfortable, though, and wanted to get away quickly. I knew him from my past – many years ago. What was just as peculiar was that in recent weeks I had passed him several times in the street. He has lived in Altrincham for many years and yet I had only begun to notice him.

When I went for my next session, I talked with my massage-therapist about the encounter. I explained that I had sensed I would see her with someone. I also told her that I knew her boyfriend many years ago. I called him by his full name, which apparently no one else does. Now, the reason that I knew him was that he used to go out with a very old friend of mine, someone who was an important part of my recovery journey. Well, the next time that we met, guess what had happened. Both my therapist and her boyfriend had bumped into my old friend for the first time in years.

For weeks this old friend constantly floated about in my consciousness. The feeling kept growing stronger. I took a congregation member to visit his mother in St Ann's Hospice and as I drove there, I felt powerfully this sense of my old friend. As we were leaving the hospice, from the other wing walked a figure I recognised. She looked at me and came rushing forward. She said 'I nearly didn't recognise you as you look so different, you look so well'. We spoke for a few moments. She told me that she is getting married and had been to a wedding at the Unitarian chapel in Macclesfield. I told her I had this strong sense I would see her that day and she said, 'Oh well, it must be fate.' We agreed to meet up to discuss plans for a wedding, as she wants me to conduct the ceremony.

Now what does this all mean? Was it merely coincidence? Was something greater at play? Was it fate? Was it meant to be? For me it was a beautiful example of synchronicity. We will see what grows from it. According to the writer Phil Cousineau, 'Synchronicity is an inexplicable and profoundly meaningful coincidence that stirs the soul and offers a glimpse of one's destiny.'

Most folk talk of experiencing moments of synchronicity. The anticipation of a phone call from a person seconds before it rings; the chance meeting with someone from the

From nothing to Everything

by
Danny Crosby



past with the answer they've been looking for; that feeling of deep connection with someone when something happens to them although they are physically miles apart, they feel their pain and/or joy deeply. I have come to believe that these feelings, if we pay attention to them, will call us to engage with life in deeper more meaningful ways. I have learnt that by doing so, more meaning and intuitive connection emerges. Mothers often talk about a connection with their children – of feeling their pain, even when they are not with them.

I've heard similar experiences recounted by siblings – especially twins. Can this be rationally explained? It would appear not, and yet so many of us recount them. I have felt this too. It happened to me the moment Ethan, my friend Claire's son, died. I was on the bus to work when suddenly I felt violently sick in my stomach – a sensation I had never felt before or since. I discovered later this was the exact moment that the breathing apparatus in the hospital was turned off and Ethan was declared dead. Now you could just say that this was coincidence, but I believe it was due to the connection between us. It is not something I thought much about at the time, but as I have reflected upon it since it has made more sense.

Many would say I was just feeling ill. My answer to that would be that this was not merely travel sickness. It was far more violent – perhaps the most violent inner experience I have ever felt. I had a very special connection with Ethan, throughout the few years that he lived, he taught me how to experience the Love I know today as God.

The psychologist Carl Jung coined the term 'synchronicity' in an attempt to explain what he called 'meaningful coincidences', that occur due to seemingly unrelated events. The concept came about through the many baffling coincidences his patients shared with him – especially as he began to realise that they went beyond what could be attributed to mere chance. His interest has also been attributed to a series of conversations he had with Albert Einstein. Synchronicity suggests that events we experience as human beings are more than mere chance, that there is more going on; that we humans and all of life are connected at a deeper level than would outwardly appear. This suggests that who we are, what we think, feel, imagine, react to, are interrelated with the things going on around us in our environment and that at times who and what we are, how we appear to be to others and how, who, and what they are and how they appear to us converge together.

Could this be true? Well maybe, maybe not ... It is for each of us to decide...

The Rev Danny Crosby is minister at Altrincham and Urmston.

Dr Williams: 300 years later h

By Alan Ruston

Who was Dr Daniel Williams and his Library now to be seen in a fine 19th century setting in Gordon Square, not far from Euston station in London? Daniel Williams was born about 1643 at or near Wrexham, nobody knows who his father was and the identity of his mother is only a little bit better than a guess. Later in life Williams said he had had no other occupation but reading from the age of five. He had little formal education but was preaching regularly by the age of 18, and entered a form of ministry the following year. This was in 1662 when it was a brave thing to do as the government of the day was very anti dissenter. The Act of Uniformity of 1662 led to the ejection of ministers from many parish churches, in consequence it's considered the year from which the nonconformist denominations can date their existence.

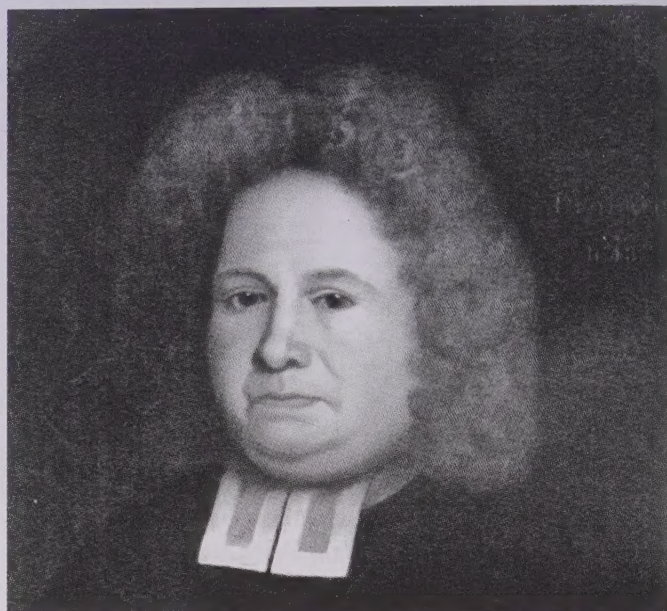
Daniel was a Presbyterian and went to Ireland as a private chaplain. From 1667 he had a long ministry at Wood Street Chapel in Dublin. It was here in 1675 he married his first wife, Elizabeth Meredith (the widow of Thomas Juxon) who had aristocratic connections. It's his wives, and he had two, who are important in our story. Not in themselves, but because they had money, particularly his first one. Williams had no children with either but both had offspring from previous marriages. He never had financial worries and clearly lived well after he migrated to minister in London in 1687. He was able to purchase libraries of dissenting ministers, following his first wife's death in 1698. He married Jane Barkstead in 1701, who was much his junior.

Pride, affectation and ill manners

In religious terms Williams was a steady influence, though he engaged in disputatious theological argument. He was considered by some to be a form of dissenting bishop; it was said that he behaved like a privy councillor, for he was adviser to King William in the 1on Irish affairs. He was very careful with money – John Evans in his funeral sermon for Williams said, 'he exercised a Frugality as to his own Person, possibly to an Excess.' A critic saw him as 'the greatest bundle of pride, affectation and ill manners he had met with.' (John Fox)

By 1711 he was getting infirm so he made his will, which was extremely long and convoluted. A year or so later he added another section to it, but it was not witnessed which later caused problems as his widow Jane contested it. He died on 26 January 1716, just 300 years ago and is the reason for this commemoration. His tomb, maintained by his trustees, can be seen in Bunhill Fields Burial Ground in London. Williams left a staggering sum - £50,000 which he wanted to go to a whole range of good works. A printed version of his will comes to about 40 pages!

The will was to be administered by 23 Presbyterian trustees, about a third were laymen, who Williams appointed. They did not get going until the 1721 because of disputes over the will and their successors have administered his estate ever since. As they were Presbyterians they appointed other presbyterians, both ministerial and lay, who did the same over time. As you will know English Presbyterians over time became Unitarian in belief which has meant that for the last 200 years at least the trustees have mainly been Unitarians. I'm now the Senior Trustee having served for nearly 41 years. For about the last hundred years, some of the new appointments have been either



Dr Daniel Williams, by Gustavus Ellinthorpe Sintzenich, via Wikimedia Commons

Baptist, Congregational and Quaker to balance out the trustees across the three denominations. Unitarians have always been in the majority and remain so today. Some commentators have said the Trust looks like a Unitarian closed shop – my response to that is 'you might say that, I couldn't possibly comment.'

Now to the Library. Daniel Williams stated that his books and that of purchased libraries should be open to the public to read. He left money for a junior minister to look after it for £10 a year but not for much else. He looked to his trustees to put together the funds to secure a building, a task easier said than done. The legal arguments, plus getting the land -cost £450 - and the building erected – cost £1518 - meant that the Library, now one of the oldest public libraries in the world, did not open in Red Cross Street in London until January 1730. When much later, the trustees got permission to add modern works the Library blossomed. It became the centre for Dissent generally not only in London but nationally and it remained so until the 1830s.

A prescient move

The Library was but one of the remits given to his trustees'. Dating from his time in Ireland, Daniel Williams had a strong antipathy to Roman Catholicism so he left money for the support of ministerial study at the University of Glasgow. Indeed the will states that if ever the state religion in England was to become Roman Catholic then all of his trust funds were to go to Scotland. Today the Trust supports ministers to attend that university to take higher degrees. Support was also to be given to a wide variety of disadvantaged groups. The trust was responsible for a period for a school for girls in North Wales. Book grants for ministers was a feature of the work of the trust for a long time, each trustee nominating a different minister each year to receive books. Much of this activity has in more straightened financial times been terminated.

The Library has had more than one home. It stayed at its original site of 1730 in Red Cross Street until 1873 when it moved to nearby Grafton Street, right by Heal's the well known furniture company. Manchester College, now at Oxford,

(Continued on next page)

extraordinary legacy lives on

(Continued from previous page)

moved out in 1889 of University Hall in Gordon Square, also in Bloomsbury. The trustees decided to move there in 1890 on a long lease where it remains to this day. Events showed that this was the right thing to do as just over fifty years later the premises in Grafton Street were entirely destroyed by a WW2 bomb.

Second helpings

The will states that the trustees should meet regularly, and up to four times a year should have a dinner together. Perhaps it's one of the things most widely known about Dr Williams's Trust. In the past the food consumed could be large, as the trustees invite guests to their dinners. Today the trustees, now 18 in number, eat more modestly and the practice of dining together has been adopted by other similar trusts because at meals relationships are developed and actions planned. The aspect most known about these dinners is that it's said we always have roly-poly pudding. Indeed from about the 1850s this was true and for many years as a trustee I did enjoy it. There is one person, no longer a trustee, who was known to have two second helpings. But tastes have changed as well as the desire for slimmer figures which means we have it no more.

Now to the Library itself. In its early years it had perhaps 10,000 books, but this figure increased as libraries of leading dissenters were added and purchases of new books was allowed. By the middle of the 19th century the figure had grown to upwards of 25,000. A big expansion took place around 1900 so that by the time of the bicentenary in 1916 there was over 66,000 volumes. Today that figure has grown massively and its' thought there are at least 280,000 books, besides an extensive manuscript collection. It's the premier library for the study of dissent, though John Rylands University Library of Manchester sometimes claims to run it close. The holdings include church history, theology, general history, philosophy, religion in many of its manifestations together with runs of journals in each of these fields. It has a large collection of chapel histories of all denominations, so it's the place to go if you want to explore the Nonconformist past. It's also a repository for archives.

For example, the records up to about 40 years ago of the British & Foreign Unitarian Association as well as the General Assembly are there. Some amazing oddities have been acquired over the years, like Oliver Cromwell's death mask, and a panoramic map, in sections, in all of over 15 feet in length of Istanbul, taken in about 1913. It was made in France, the sponsor, it's understood being the German Secret Service – how did that get into the collection!

Access the library

The Library has a nice new website. To get it, just Google 'Dr Williams's Library'. Or, try: <http://dwlib.co.uk>) You can go straight to a catalogue of holdings, which while comprehensive for modern additions does not yet cover the whole content of the Library. For that you will have ask or go to look at the card index which it's hoped will be redundant at an early date.

The Library membership is on a subscription basis for regular users but if you have a query about your chapel then make contact and I'm sure the staff will do what they can



Dr Williams's Library today. Photo by David Wykes

to help you. The Library Director is Dr David Wykes whose knowledge of dissent is encyclopaedic. The building itself is much as it was in the 19th century, and its setting is often seen on TV or in films, although you don't realise it; this is a useful source of income for the trust. A small part of the film *The Young Sherlock Holmes* was filmed there, and more recently Kevin Costner was recording a film role, set in part, at the Library. The occasions when it has appeared on TV are too numerous to mention.

300-year anniversary

Now as it's 300 years since the death of the founder, are we doing anything to mark the event? Dr Daniel Williams's tomb is still there in Bunhill Fields Burial Ground near Old Street tube station in central London, the whole is the responsibility of the City of London. It's in excellent condition because the trustees regularly have it refurbished and with new gold lettering. On 7 February 1816 several trustees made a pilgrimage to it, and later that day had dinner which was chaired by the Lord Mayor of London, who that year was a dissenter. Most of the trustees made a similar visit on 26 January 1916 when the senior trustee spoke. *The Inquirer* of the day says that they didn't do more because the War was at its height.

Did the present trustees do something similar on 26 January 2016? No we didn't. We saved ourselves for our summer meeting next week when, following a lunch at the Library, we're making our pilgrimage to Bunhill Fields in what we hope will be good weather, followed by a tea at Wesley's Chapel which is opposite the Burial Ground. There will be invited guests then and speeches. However we have planned to provide something more lasting – a short history of the trust and library appeared in 1816, nothing in 1916, so we have commissioned a new history, of book length, based on the archives, which is being prepared by Rev Dr Alan Argent. We hope to publish it in the not too distant future.

So, if you're interested in knowing more about Dr Williams's Library go to the website and see what is there. In the longer term wait for the book to appear and get a more detailed consideration of this remarkable trust which for much of its history has been central to the story of Nonconformity in this country.

Alan Ruston is a Unitarian historian and a member of the Watford fellowship.



Photo by Gary Scott www.garyslens.ca

Doris is back: Time to get into the spirit

From time to time a group of people will pop up proclaiming that the answer to the dwindling numbers of Unitarians is ... but they are never very specific and they seem to want whatever it is to be done by every one which is just plain daft. We spend a lot of time talking about how we appreciate diversity so attempting to find a one-size-fits-all solution is a waste of time. I also feel that attempting to do things that will bring people in is a waste of time. We have seen certain ministers and certain congregations bring in lots of new people, which is great, but what they are doing cannot necessarily be undertaken by anyone else.

There is, however, one small area where there is something that could be done by that small particular group likely to be interested. Why am I tiptoeing as if over eggshells? Because I want to whisper the word 'liturgy'. We used to have 'liturgy' and we gave it up because it felt too prescriptive – and if you can find an old 'Order of Service' you will see that it was very, very prescriptive. And there came about a period in Unitarianism when services were as un-liturgical and as un-ritualistic as possible. Which suits me and a lot of people like me.

But there are signs of softening around the edges. Most congregations now light the chalice (when this was introduced at my friend's chapel she went to the minister afterwards and said: 'Papist, it's just Papist.') and many congregations fell with little squeaks of joy at the suggestions from the Pagans among us that we should celebrate the various solstices. In a world which is so far removed from the natural cycle, it can be a joyful and deeply spiritual experience to open your heart and mind to the glory and wonder of the natural world. Even I have been known to take delight in being given a pebble to hold and smooth and examine though I have to say that I draw the line at birch twigs and I am not terribly keen on writing things down and burying them. But hey ho. I'm a Unitarian and I can get almost as much spiritual uplift from other people getting their spiritual uplift from something I wouldn't want to do but they do. Can you follow that or have I lost myself in a subordinate clause somewhere?



Chorley, I learned from Unitarian General Assembly President Dot Hewerdine, have the occasional 'Quiet Service' – half an hour of music and readings. I think that you might like to try this. And if you don't enjoy it you don't have to do it again and if you do, then you can build it in to your preaching cycle. But you won't know unless you try it. And it is only half an hour and you could always go to the pub for lunch afterwards.

However, I want to go one step further. Someone described Unitarianism as being a teashop without the cake. And I know many people who rush into Unitarianism full of delight at the freedom and the openness but then find that there is something missing. And I think that something is liturgy. It is perfectly possible that every group that wants a liturgy will end up creating their own. Great. Super. Just what Unitarianism is all about. But I suspect that nothing will happen unless SOMETHING IS DONE. So I have done it. I have written a liturgy.

Please, please talk to each other over coffee and find out if there is a group, however small, that might be interested in trying a liturgical service and get them to email me: haughton@mallard99.demon.co.uk. I think you might get further with something to criticize/tear to pieces/turn upside down than if you have to start from scratch. Please do not do this in place of a regular service. It has to be done as an experiment. But, as above, you won't know until you try.

And if you do it, please, please, please, let me know.

Dorothy Houghton is a Unitarian worship leader in the Midlands.

Aberdeen welcomes Interfaith minister

By Caroline Cormack

I have been an Interfaith Minister since 2010 and have recently stepped into the role as Lay Leader of Aberdeen Unitarian Church. I wanted to write about how this came about and express my personal view of how this can work positively for all those involved.

Just over 21 years ago, my husband and I were married by the Rev Anne Wicker, who was then the Minister at the Aberdeen Unitarian Church. We were fortunate to come across her when we were planning our wedding and she provided a meaningful, personal ceremony without tying us to any religious creed. I remember being interested in Unitarianism at the time and even attended a women's group at the church but didn't feel ready then to commit myself to a spiritual group.

During the following years, as I had my family, I started reading more spiritual literature and tried different meditation groups from various faiths. This culminated in my involvement with the Interfaith Ministry course run by the Interfaith Seminary in 2008. This organisation was set up originally in New York in 1981 by Rabbi Joseph Gelberman and other religious leaders. They hoped to encourage those wanting to serve people of all faiths and create more understanding in order to help prevent the horror of the holocaust ever happening again.

My course was held in Edinburgh and consisted of residential weekends, study groups, personal learning and retreats. Over two years, we studied eight major faiths, ceremony work and spiritual counselling. We were also expected to undertake deep personal spiritual work demonstrating how our studies helped us grow and opened our minds and hearts. We completed two placements – both of mine were in chaplaincy and I continued to be a volunteer chaplaincy visitor in the hospital after the course.

In the meantime I had become more involved in Aberdeen Inter Faith Group and it was there that I met Sue Good who was from the Aberdeen Church. In May 2011 Sue invited me to lead a service sharing some of my interfaith learning. I chose the theme of Welcome, beginning with Rumi's well known quote: 'Be certain, in the religion of love there are no believers or unbelievers. Love embraces All.'

I was warmly welcomed by the congregation and they must have liked what they heard as they asked me to return three months later and I began leading services there regularly.



Caroline Cormack became an Interfaith minister in 2010. Photo provided by Caroline Cormack.



Aberdeen Unitarians invited Caroline Cormack into ministry earlier this year. Photo provided by Caroline Cormack

My own spiritual learning and ideas immediately felt very comfortable alongside Unitarianism so it felt very natural in time to join the church and continue to hold services on many life themes such as 'fear and judgement in faith', 'resilience and renewal' and 'honouring the cycle of life'.

Alongside my involvement with the Unitarian Church, I continued volunteer hospital chaplaincy work and also held weddings and funerals as an Interfaith Celebrant. I have also enjoyed a very full family life with our four children now aged from 12 to 20.

I was delighted to be asked to become half-time lay leader of Aberdeen Unitarian Church earlier this year and although it is a steep learning curve, the more I explore Unitarian ideas, the more I see that my initial theme of 'welcoming all' fits perfectly with this role and the church community.

I really related to an article in an earlier edition of *The Inquirer* by the Rev Danny Crosby (28 February, 2015) about Unitarians being 'like-hearted' rather than necessarily 'like-minded'. I am sure the members of our congregation do not all think the same or hold the same beliefs but a healthy church community aspires to be as loving and open-hearted as they can be, both as individuals and as a group relating to those we meet. I know that Interfaith Ministers have a similar aspiration.

Unitarians have been at the forefront of encouraging good interfaith relations – interfaith services were being held in the Aberdeen Church and I am sure other Unitarian churches many years ago, before the word 'interfaith' had become such a political issue. Of course, many different religious and spiritual communities are committed to interfaith work, but it is certainly central to Unitarian philosophy and feels very positive for me undertaking this role.

I still have much to learn about Unitarianism but the heart of this faith – openness, welcome, justice, care for our environment and awareness of the oneness of humanity all seem absolutely to go hand in hand with all I have learnt during my Interfaith Ministry course.

I have applied to start the Worship Studies course soon and look forward to expanding my knowledge of Unitarian thought and history.

I am not sure exactly where we are going as a church community but as long as we are willing to keep learning, keep talking and keep loving I believe there is real hope of an exciting time ahead of us!

Interfaith Rev Caroline Cormack is minister at Aberdeen Unitarian Church.

'Peak Experiences' enhance all faiths

By Richard Boeke

At the opening worship of 'Peak Experience And Peace', a conference sponsored by the International Association of Religious Freedom (IARF) and the World Conference of Faiths, we sang Rumi's poem, 'Come, come, whoever you are ... Ours is no caravan of despair ... Come, yet again, come.' The Rev Art Lester welcomed us and told us of the bombs of WWII which destroyed the old sanctuary. The present church was dedicated over 50 years ago, when its minister was Rev Gabor Kereki, who fled Hungary after the war. We paused for prayer and silence. Then Andrew Wickens on violin and Elizabeth Hills on piano awed us with the 'Kol Nidre', the Jewish Prayer of forgiveness and 'at-one-ment'.

Paying a price for kindness

The Rev Ashley Hills opened the panel on personal experience of 'Peaks and Valleys' with his experience at a welcome day at an Ahmadyya Muslim Mosque. Their motto is, 'Love for all, hatred for none'. This community launched a campaign promoting 'peace, love and unity' following the murder of Glasgow shopkeeper Asad Shah. A Muslim drove 200 miles to kill the shopkeeper because the shopkeeper had sent Easter cards to Christian friends.

Our programme also celebrated the 100th Birthday of Inter-faith Scholar Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1916-2000). The Rev Dr Marcus Braybrooke, co-president of the World Congress of Faiths, opened his talk with thanks to Cantwell Smith: 'I am glad that amongst other things, we are remembering the 100th anniversary of Wilfred Cantwell Smith's birth. I first met Cantwell Smith at a conference at Patiala in the Punjab, held to mark the 400th anniversary of the birth of Guru Nanak. It was even hotter than usual in the Punjab, even so as a true English gentleman Wilfred insisted on wearing his suit throughout. Remembering him, I looked again at his book *Towards a World Theology* and my review of it. Too often people have some knowledge of the history of their own faith, but are ignorant of the faiths of others. Cantwell Smith starts from "the unity or coherence of humankind's religious history." He insisted that "we have all along been participants in the world history of religions" and that through the centuries religions have interacted. This I tried to illustrate in my *Beacons of Light* – picturing the spiritual history of humankind as a great river with various springs, sources and tributaries, always changing, sometimes dividing, maybe with backwaters, but moving forward and enriching the present with what is carried forward from the past and opening up new vistas for the future.'

Noble purpose being formed

Marcus added, 'I would like also to remember Yehudi Menuhin, who was also born 100 years ago this month. He was a Patron of the World Congress of Faiths and I looked back recently at his 'One People' oration given in 1971, published in *World Faiths*. He too has this universal sense. "Ours is the age of synthesis, when particular experiences of a bewildering variety fuse into a collective awareness, when patchwork takes on pattern ... and when finally in the crucible of collective danger threatening the whole of life on this planet, animal and vegetable life, a higher and nobler purpose, a universal and cosmic vision is being forged." Cosmonauts too have given us this message of oneness.

'In various ways my peak experiences relate to this sense of oneness – the One God to whose universal love, we respond in different ways. I was nourished in the Christian faith and

try to be a follower of Jesus, my ista devata (favourite deity). But for me the presence of God in all faith traditions is not a theological argument about exclusivism versus pluralism – but follows from some peak experiences – often when with people of other faiths. I think back many years to sitting on a hill overlooking the great temple at Rameswaram. My friends had gone there to worship.

Bells and chanting bring glory

As a non-Hindu I was not allowed to go too – but as I listened to the bells and chanting I had an overwhelming sense of the glory of God who transcends all our different ways of worshipping. Other special moments were when, at an IARF gathering, I was invited to take part in the Shinto ritual or on a pilgrimage with Sikh friends to the Golden Temple.

'We got up very early to be at the ceremony when the Guru Granth Sahib (the Sikh Holy Book) was brought into the Gurdwara – as I too bowed down, I learned a new reverence for scripture. Let me mention one other such experience. It was at a great conference about the environment held in Oxford in I think 1989. One of the speakers was Mother Teresa. I was rather down at the time. I had been diagnosed with heart problems and had taken early retirement and felt quite lonely. We were asked to share in a ceremony led by a leader of an African spiritual movement – and in a circle we shared a cup of fellowship and as I received it, I had an overwhelming sense of being encircled by love.'

Of joining and leaving faiths

Pejman Khosjasti, secretary of British Chapter of IARF, raised in a Shiite Muslim Family asked us, 'Think about the important milestones, events and influences in your life. The focus of my talk is with regard to the decisions we make in terms of joining, leaving, changing and continuing with a religion, denomination or "other system of faith within countries such as UK and US where there is no coercion, restriction and repercussion with regard to this choice. About 44% of Americans change faiths during their lives. About 16% of changes are from one denomination to another such as from Baptist to Methodist. About 28% of changes are more substantial, such as converting from Christianity to Islam or dropping religion altogether. Most people who change their religion leave their childhood faith before the age of 24. Most joined their current religion before reaching the age of 36, and very few change religions after reaching the age of 50. Many of those who change religion do so more than once. Why change? He gave examples:

- ☐ Have found god or want to be closer to god.
- ☐ Find the tenet of adopted religion appealing or habitually suited.
- ☐ Find the demeanour and circumstances of followers of adopted religion appealing.
- ☐ In response to a calamity, life trauma or on deathbed.
- ☐ To gain emotional attachment, comfort and security.

To fill a void in life Arman Mohajeri is a Baha'i who was born in Iran. She writes, 'My work entails making deportation decision on behalf of the Secretary of State to ensure public safety. I attended a Jewish School, then a Christian School, then University in Belgium.' In her talk she said, 'I was taught to independently investigate truth for myself. In my challenging job, I avoid prejudging others. Who are we to prejudge?'

For more information on the British Chapter International Association for Religious Freedom, see: www.iarf.net or contact Richard Boeke via email: r.boeke@virgin.net

Pat Shaw: Dedicated to family and church

By Andrew Parker

Pat was born in Denton in January 1944 and when still quite young was adopted by John and Clara Bancroft who lived in Dukinfield where Mrs Bancroft had a florist's shop on Town Lane. They couldn't have given Pat a better start in life and she couldn't have had better parents and everyone who knew Pat knows just how much they meant to her. Mr and Mrs Bancroft attended Old Chapel Dukinfield and so it was through them that Pat's association with Unitarianism began firstly in the Sunday School and then the Unitarian Young People's League and the Foy Society.

From school Pat went to work for a short time with the Post Office and then the Army Pay Corps but she realised early on that her real vocation was the Ministry. She trained at the Unitarian College Manchester and went on to have ministries at Wythenshawe, Brookfield Gorton, Dob Lane Failsworth, the Lincoln Group, Stalybridge and Mossley where Pat had a long and very happy ministry.

An important part of Pat's ministry in Mossley was her involvement with the Churches Together group. Pat was fully accepted, and indeed, admired on the local ecumenical scene serving as secretary of Churches Together for a number of years and President in 1998. As a result of Pat's efforts the congregation was accepted rather than just tolerated as true in most locations.

Pat was a keen supporter of the Women's League both in Mossley and also at district events. She was President of the North Cheshire Unitarian Sunday School Union in 1978 and became treasurer at the end of 2001, an office she still held. Pat had also served as both secretary and President of the East Cheshire Union of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches and supported the district in all its activities.

For a number of years now Pat has been much in demand for conducting weddings, baptisms and funerals and has probably officiated at hundreds of each. Families would turn to Pat again and again at times of differing needs and she has been well liked and respected throughout the Tameside area and well beyond.

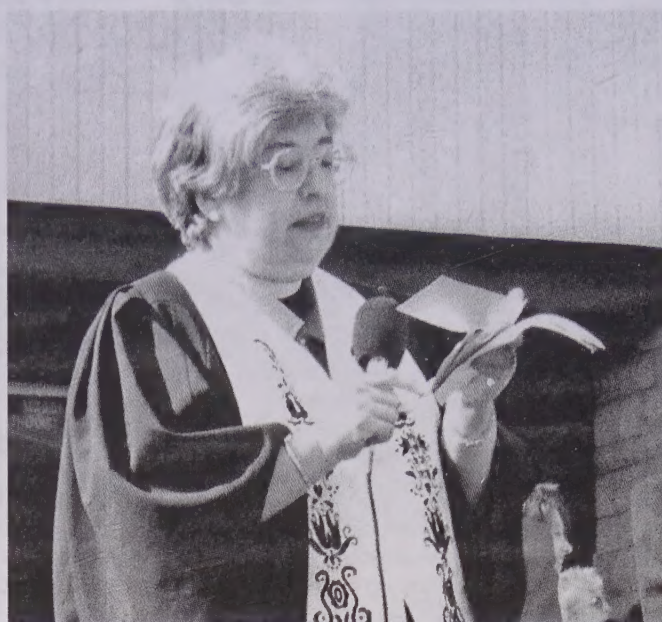
Another thing that Pat will be remembered for by the Mossley congregation is her fondness for teddy bears, which provided a huge source of enjoyment for one and all. How she ever managed to see through her car windscreen was nothing short of a miracle. There were so many bears scattered across the dashboard. Members of the congregation contributed to this by bringing her a new one back from their holidays to add to the collection.

Pat also had many talents in other spheres of her life. In her younger days she was well known amongst her friends as a good singer and in recent years she found enjoyment once again in singing, this time with the Echoes Choir and the Stalybridge WI Choir. She was also good at crafts such as knitting and crochet and she won a first several times at the Arts and Crafts for her flower arranging. Her love of flowers and flower arranging began in her mother's shop when she was young. The funeral service included this dialect poem which Pat had entered in the North Cheshire Union Arts and Crafts exhibition some years ago which reflects on those early years.

Me Mum

by Pat Shaw

Me dad were a welder in th'old days.
Me mum 'ad a shop that sold flowers.
They both started early in t'mornin'
And worked some awful long hours.



The Rev Pat Shaw, conducting a Whit Friday united service in Mossley.

A bloomin' good florist me mum was,
Makin' wreaths and weddin' bouquets.
Baskets o' flowers for Whit Friday,
Buttonholes, posies and birthday sprays.

Some'd knock on t'door, quite late at night;
'I've forgotten to order a wreath!' they'd cry with dismay.
But me mum'd accept it wi' such a kind smile
And t'wreath'd be ready - she turned no-one away.

Very "artistic" me mum was;
If she 'ad a special order for flowers,
She'd sketch out a picture for dad to see
And 'ed make a wire frame, at work, out of hours.

She once made a West 'ighland Terrier;
Moss, wet through and wired to t'frame
And covered all over in lovely white flowers;
'Twas a beauty and 'amish its name!

I remember 'er makin' a wreath for a cricketer
Wi' t' wickets, a bat and a ball;
The mourners would come and pour out their woes
And me mum - she 'ad time for 'em all.

It's near forty years since she 'ad that shop
And just a few since she passed away.
But "It were t'best flower shop in t'world!"
Someone said to me - just the other day.

She's remembered, you see, me mum and her flowers.
She lives on in all those she met.
Not just for the shop, but her kind list'nin' ear
And 'er warm words of comfort, they'll never forget.

Pat, who was a very down to earth and understanding person also had a kind list'nin' ear and warm words of comfort which have helped many people. She is now going to be missed so much by her ministerial colleagues, her many friends and especially by her family whom she adored.



A pride flag hung in the sanctuary and rainbow candles were lit for the dead at a service to remember the Orlando victims held at Ipswich Unitarian Meeting House. Photo provided by Lewis Connolly

What can you say? *for the dead of Orlando*

What can you say to make such horror easier to bear?

Nothing.

No trite words to express our dismay –
dismay that such hatred, such violence,
exists beneath the shallow veneer of our
'civilized' societies, rising from the depths
to find a channel in some embittered soul,
some deranged and bigoted mind...

In our grief and anger may we still offer
such comfort as we can, speaking words
of peace and love and hope – hope that
human nature retains some trace of the
Divine to which we can appeal...

And maybe we can know that it does,
because hatred is not the only voice –
or the strongest. Ours is stronger, true
humanity's is stronger. That's why so
many people care, why so many weep
at the evil that's been done.

That's why we weep ourselves.

To say this is not to offer false comfort.
It simply says that we are human, even
when inhumanity seems triumphant.

– *Cliff Reed, 19 June 2016*